RPS Planning, Transport and Environment

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A43 ROAD IMPROVEMENT

BARLEY MOW ROUNDABOUT, JUNIPER HLL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION: STAGE 3

SUMMARY REPORT

Abstract

Two evaluation trenches were excavated in an area of geophysical anomalies on land between Barley Mow Roundabout and Juniper Hill, Evenley, Northamptonshire. A number of shallow features were found and examined, but none contained any finds and they did not appear to correlate closely to the geophysical anomalies. It remains unclear whether the features are archaeological or natural in origin.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Proposals for improvements to the A43 between the M40 and Towcester will affect land between the Oxfordshire-Northamptonshire County boundary at Juniper Hill and the B4031 Barley Mow Roundabout (Fig 1). The archaeological implications of the improvement scheme were considered by Wessex Archaeology in 1993.

1.2 The initial desk-based study, field walking and geophysical survey by Wessex Archaeology identified a concentration of possible archaeological features in the area south of the Barley Mow roundabout. While the geophysical anomalies were irregular and discontinuous, they were interpreted ditched enclosures or boundaries and pits, anticipated to be of prehistoric or Roman date. The survey results are summarised in the A43: M40 to B4031 Improvement Environmental Statement Volume 2, Appendix 6 *Preliminary Archaeological Investigation* (p16, 17, 22,23; Figure 3).

1.3 Accordingly the Northamptonshire County Council Highways commissioned Northamptonshire Archaeology to undertake an archaeological evaluation. Two trial trenches were excavated within the limits of the road corridor to a specification devised by Northamptonshire Heritage ('A43 Road Improvement Scheme: Specification for Outstanding Archaeological Evaluation: M40 – B4031 Section Juniper Hill. [22.8.00]). The trenches, 20m and 25 m in length, were excavated in the areas of the identified geophysical anomalies (Fig. 2). The objectives of the evaluation were to establish the date, extent, character and degree of preservation of any archaeological remains on the site.

2 TRIAL TRENCHES (Fig 3)

Trench 1

2.1 Trench 1 was located on the north side of the site and was aligned NE-SW. It was placed within an area of geophysical anomalies interpreted as possible pits.

2.2 A shallow topsoil of 0.25m was removed to reveal a natural limestone gravel.

2.3 Several features were present within the natural including two possible interconnecting pits [109] – the excavated one about 0.25 m deep - and two shallow gullies [105] and [107] each about 0.35 m deep. Several irregular features were also

present. All the features were filled by a sterile compacted reddish brown clayey silt containing the occasional limestone inclusions. No archaeological finds were recovered from any of the excavated features.

Trench 2

2.4 Trench 2 ran on the same alignment as Trench 1 and was located in the southern part of the site to examine linear geophysical anomaly. It was extended to 25 m in length to uncover the features thought to be causing the anomaly.

2.5 The natural limestone was present 0.20 m to 0.25 m below the topsoil.

2.6 A pit [205], about 0.30 m deep, and shallow linear feature [207], just 50 mm deep were uncovered towards the south end of the trench. Both of these features were filled by a similar sterile reddish brown clayey silt. The only find recovered was a small fragment of fired clay from the surface of [205]. In this area a series of recent plough marks had disturbed several irregular clay-filled features.

3 DISCUSSION

3.1 The results from the evaluation at Juniper Hill are inconclusive. Although several features were present, none appeared to be similar to those indicated to the geophysical anomalies, a fact possibly due to their shallowness.

3.2 The lack finds of any description from the features makes interpretation difficult at this stage. The fragment of fired clay in Trench 2 seems likely to have derived from the base of the ploughsoil, rather than the underlying feature. While the forms of some of the features discovered suggest that they may be archaeological, this has not been demonstrated and it seems possible that they are of natural formation. Their reddish clayey fills would be more typical of either a natural, or an earlier, rather than later, prehistoric origin.

SCHEDULE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 1: Site location plan

Fig 2: Trench location plan in relation to geophysical survey

Fig 3: Trenches 1 and 2 plans

Project director:	Andy Mudd, BA, MIFA - Senior Project Officer
Fieldwork director:	Tim Hallam, BA, PIFA - Project Supervisor
Text:	Tim Hallam,
Illustrations:	Cain Hegarty, MA and Erlend Hindmarch BSc
Edited by:	Andy Mudd
Approved by:	Steve Parry, Head of Northamptonshire Archaeology

Northamptonshire Archaeology
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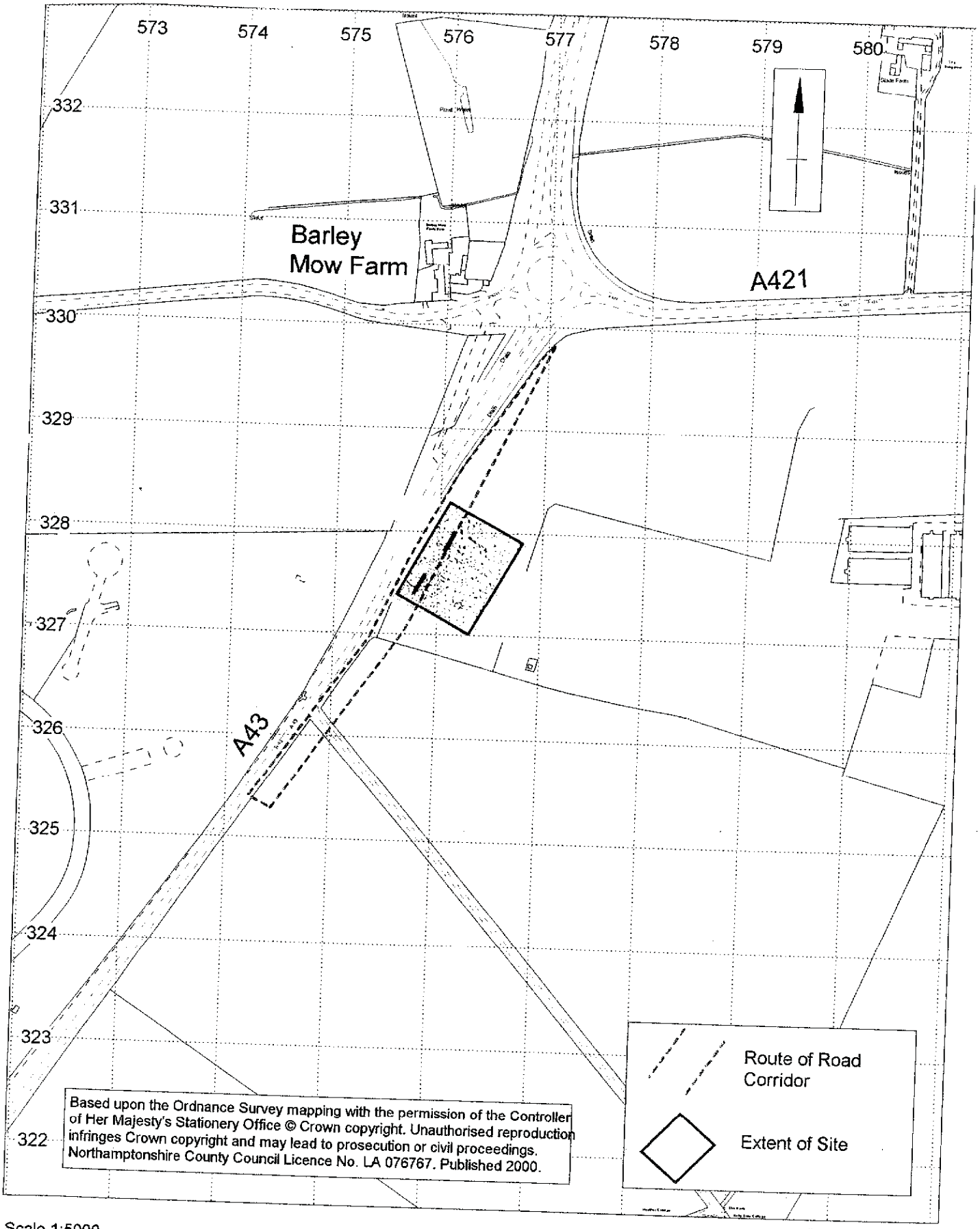

Scale 1:5000

Fig. 1

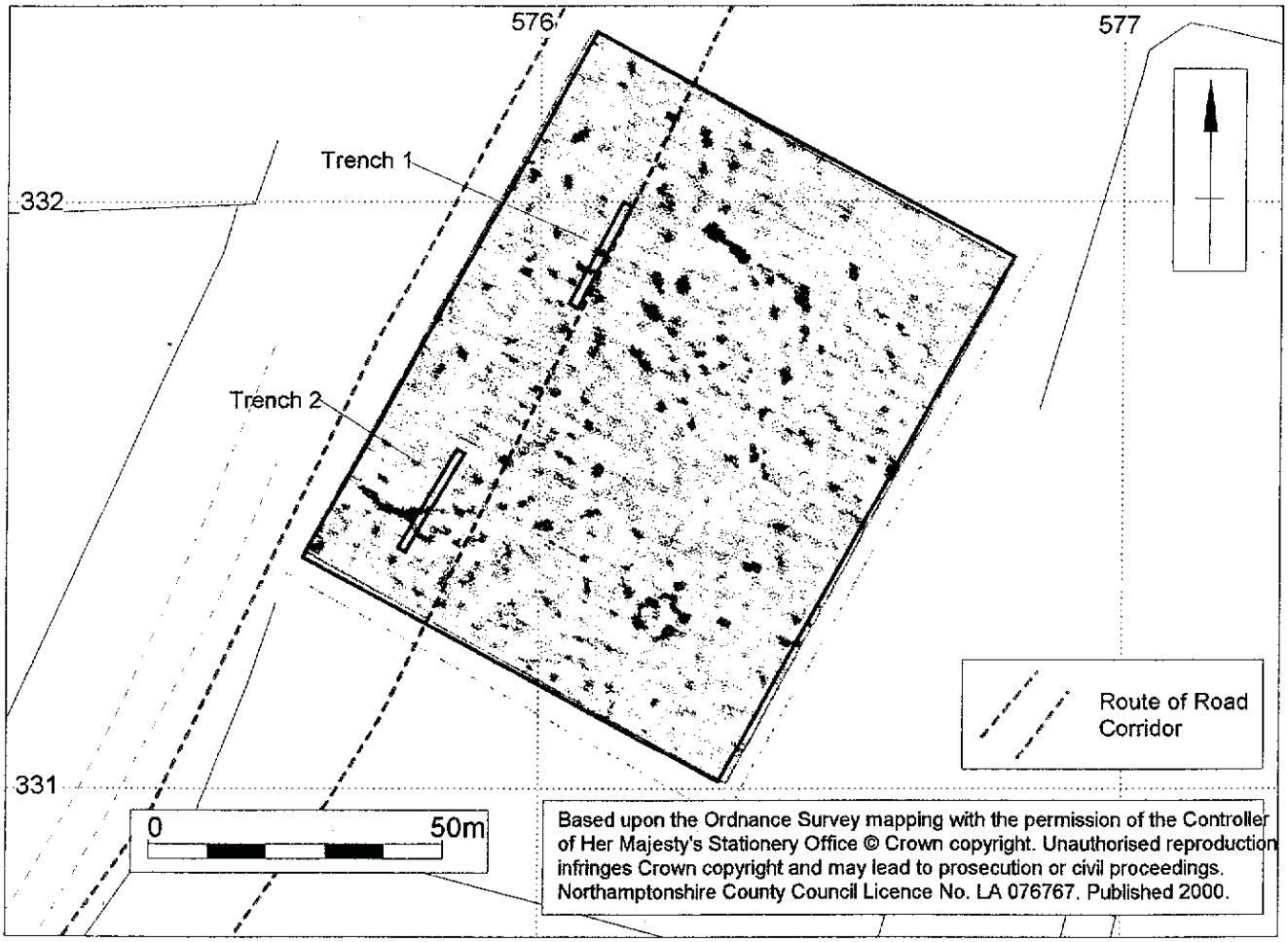
576
577
Trench 1
332
Trench 2
331
Route of Road Corridor
0
50m
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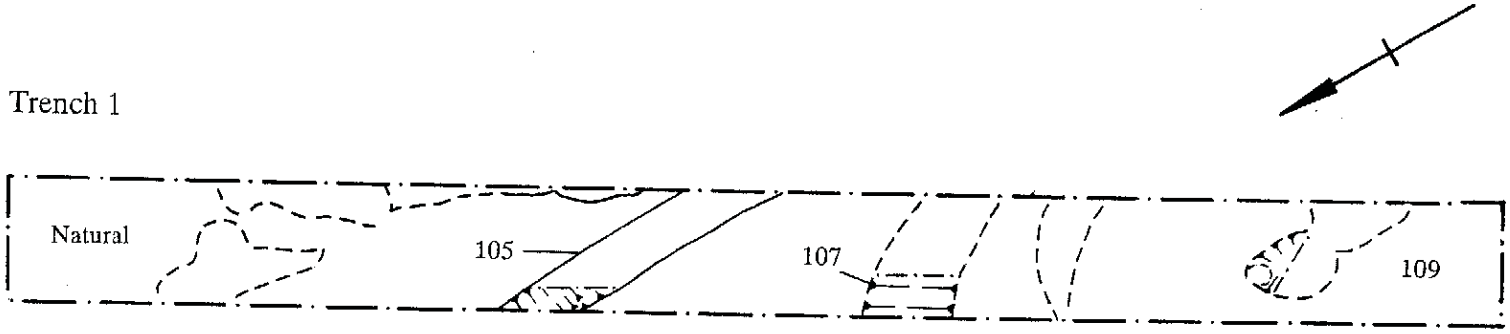
Fig. 2

Trench 1



Trench 2

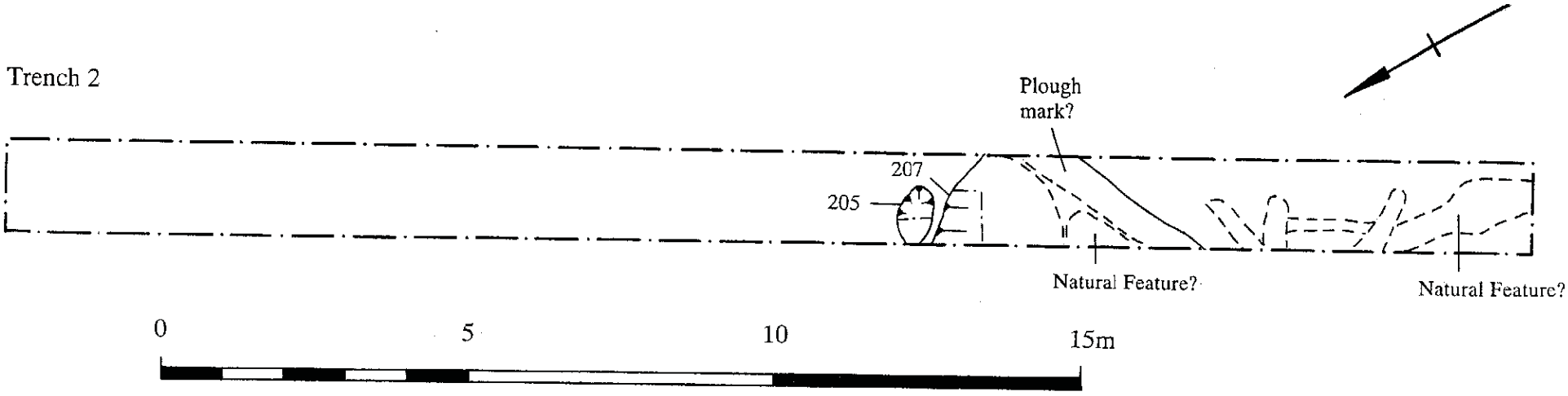


Fig. 3